

Message Text

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64

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6094

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY ROME

UNCLAS VIENNA 5759

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EGEN, EAGR, AU

SUBJECT: HEAVY RAINS AND FLOODS HIT AUSTRIA

1. HEAVY AND CONTINUOUS RAINS ACCOMPANIED BY HIGH WINDS OVER MOST OF AUSTRIA IN LAST SEVERAL DAYS HAVE BROUGHT WIDESPREAD FLOODING, PARTICULARLY IN DANUBE VALLEY, BUT ALSO IN SOUTHERN PROVINCES, CARINTHIA AND STYRIA. IN ADDITION TO HEAVY RAINS, THERE HAS ALSO BEEN AS MUCH AS TWO METERS OF SNOW FALL IN HIGH MOUNTAIN AREAS. IN LAST 24 HOURS RAINS HAVE LARGELY CEASED.

2. RAILROAD SERVICE HAS BEEN INTERRUPTED AT ABOUT A DOZEN POINTS. BECAUSE OF HEAVY WATER DAMAGE, MAIN RR LINE BETWEEN VIENNA AND WESTERN PROVINCES NOW CONFINED TO ONE TRACK ONLY. LONG-DISTANCE TRAINS ARE EXPERIENCING CONSIDERABLE DELAYS. BUSES ARE BEING USED IN SOME AREAS WHERE TRAIN SERVICE NOT OPERATING. LANDSLIDES HAVE BLOCKED ROADS IN MANY AREAS. SOME DAMS AND BRIDGES REPORTEDLY DESTROYED. TRAFFIC ON DANUBE RIVER HAS BEEN SUSPENDED. SHIPPING
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AUTHORITIES EXPECT NORMAL PASSENGER AND FREIGHT TRAFFIC

ON DANUBE WILL BE RESUMED IN ONE TO TWO WEEKS TIME.
THUS FAR, 11 DEATHS DUE TO STORM REPORTED. AIRPORT
TRAFFIC AT VIENNA'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT REPORTED TO
BE FUNCTIONING NORMALLY. IN PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT,
EFFECT ON AGRICULTURE NOT CONSIDERED BY AUTHORITIES TO BE VERY
SERIOUS. WHILE SOME GRAINS, PARTICULARLY WINTER WHEAT
MAY BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED, CORN, BEETS AND RYE
APPARENTLY NOT SERIOUSLY DAMAGED. PRECAUTIONARY
MEASURES STILL IN EFFECT FOR VIENNA AND LOWER DANUBE
VALLEY AREA.

3. ACCORDING TO AUSTRIAN OFFICIALS, EXTENT DAMAGE THROUGH-
OUT COUNTRY WILL NOT BE FULLY KNOWN FOR SEVERAL WEEKS.
FINANCE MINISTRY'S SPECIAL CATASTROPHE FUND (ESTABLISHED
IN 1965) WILL BE AVAILABLE; DAMAGE MUST FIRST BE REPORTED
TO PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES WHO IN TURN REPORT TO FINANCE
MINISTRY. EXTENT OF DAMAGE IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ASSESS AT
THIS POINT.

4. IF DAMAGES PROVE TO BE EXTENSIVE, RESULT WILL BE
ADDED STRAIN ON ALREADY OVERLY-STRAINED FINANCES OF
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. FACED WITH CONSIDERABLE SHORT-
FALL IN REVENUES DUE TO SLUGGISH ECONOMIC SITUATION,
AND YET COMMITTED TO HEAVY WELFARE-STATE EXPENDITURES,
GOVERNMENT INCREASINGLY FORCED TO BORROW ABROAD TO
MAKE ENDS MEET. QUESTION CAUSING SOME CONCERN
IS EXTENT TO WHICH BAD WEATHER AND FLOODING MAY
ADVERSELY AFFECT TOURISM, ONE OF FEW BRIGHT SPOTS
IN OTHERWISE RATHER SLACK ECONOMIC SCENE AT THIS TIME. BUCHANAN

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